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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE INCENTIVE AWARDS PLAN

SECTION 1 - GENERAL

1. PURPOSE. The USDA Incentive Awards Plan is to give effect to Title III of Public Law 763, 83d Congress, approved September 1, 1954, referred to as the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act and to the pertinent regulations and instructions issued by the Civil Service Commission. The plan provides Departmental instructions and regulations to implement the Act and the Commission's regulations, and therefore that material is not included except as necessary to clarify the Department's plan.

2. POLICY. a. Integration with Supervision and Management. Incentive awards shall be used as an integral part of supervision and management throughout the Department by the recognition of employees who by their suggestions, inventions, superior accomplishments or other personal efforts contribute to the efficiency, economy or other improvement of Department operations, or who perform special acts or services in the public interest in connection with or related to their official employment.

b. Type of Award. It shall be the Department's policy to recognize contributions of the suggestion or single idea type and above average work performance type by the granting of cash awards. Creative efforts, important contributions to science, research, management or operations, to the public or in the public interest may receive cash awards, but should generally be recognized by honor awards.

3. DEFINITIONS.

a. ~~Act~~—The term "Act" means Title III of Public Law 763, 83d Congress, approved September 1, 1954, referred to as the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act.

- b. ~~Department~~—The term ~~Department~~ means the Department of Agriculture.
- c. ~~Employee~~—The term "employee" includes any person who holds some type of appointment in the Department of Agriculture.
- d. ~~Plan~~—The term "plan" is the Secretary's written statement giving effect to the Act and the Commission's regulations and instructions governing the Incentive Awards Program.
- e. ~~Employee Contribution~~—The term "employee contribution" means (1) a suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other personal effort which contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations, or (2) the performance by an employee of a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related to his official employment.
- f. ~~Incentive Award~~—The term "incentive award" means either a cash award, an honor award, or both.
- g. ~~Honor Award~~—The term—"honor award" means a Distinguished Service Award, Superior Service Award or Length-of-Service award granted by the Secretary.
- h. ~~Departmental Award~~—The term "departmental award" means an incentive award granted by the Secretary for an approved employee contribution from an employee or employees of the Department.
- i. ~~Presidential Award~~—The term "Presidential Award" means an award granted by the President in accordance with the Act.

4. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. This plan provides for central administrative direction and review, and delegates certain authorities and responsibilities to Agency Heads, the Director of Personnel, and the Administrative Assistant Secretary who will approve awards over \$1,000. These authorities and responsibilities

may be redelegated by the Agency Heads, the Director of Personnel and the Administrative Assistant Secretary to individuals or committees.

a. Director of Personnel. The Director of Personnel shall give over-all policy guidance to the incentive awards program; stimulate wide employee participation and will be responsible for the granting of certain awards as herein stated.

b. Heads of Agencies. The head of each agency is authorized to grant agency and interagency awards to employees in accordance with specific agency authorities set forth in SECTIONS 2 and 3. In this connection, authority is given to pay monetary awards for employee contributions regardless of whether they are of the suggestion or performance types. Employee contributions may be either within or without their job responsibilities; however, contributions within an employee's job responsibilities shall be so superior or meritorious as to warrant special recognition. Examples of ideas and performance which warrant consideration include:

- (1) An idea which results in important improvement in operations. Originality of the idea is unnecessary,
- (2) The suggestion or development of an invention, whether or not it is eligible for a patent is immaterial,
- (3) Performance whereby previously unattained records of production are achieved or top performance in accordance with production records,
- (4) Sustained work performance above the average that merits recognition (formerly recognized, in most instances, by a Step Increase for Superior Accomplishment),
- (5) Performance which involves the overcoming of exceptional or unusual difficulties,
- (6) Exemplary or courageous handling of an emergency situation in connection with or related to official employment, or
- (7) Important contributions to science or research.

c. Review of Agency Awards Program. The Director of Personnel will inspect agency incentive awards programs as a part of the regular Office of Personnel delegated authority review program.

5. METHODS OF DISCOVERY. Agencies shall develop suitable methods within their jurisdictional areas for identifying all instances of outstanding service. These methods shall include the systematic review of activities the major purpose of which is to identify units, supervisors, and employees outstanding in efficiency. Reviews should be coordinated with agency's management program, personnel utilization surveys, and other programs that may result in the discovery of instances of outstanding performance. Achievements of employees who receive outstanding performance ratings shall be considered for incentive awards.

6. REVIEW OF CASH AWARDS FOR POSSIBLE HONORARY RECOGNITION. Agency Heads shall review all cash award cases for possible honorary recognition. This means that if a contribution is to be recognized by both cash and an honor award the cash award must in all cases be made prior to honorary recognition, as an achievement recognized by the Secretary as warranting a Superior or Distinguished Award may not later be used as a basis for a cash award.

7. PUBLICITY. In order for the awards program to operate successfully and possess substantial incentive value, it must be made known to employees generally. In particular, supervisors should be well informed of the plan and of the established standards, so that they will be alert to report instances of outstanding service. Awards will be reported in Department publications and otherwise. In addition, agencies that have suitable publications should run articles announcing such awards and describing the idea, method, or device, the special service, or the outstanding performance that merited the award.

8. ADDITIONAL RECOGNITION. Agency Heads shall provide that recognition given under the Incentive Awards Act be considered in qualifying and selecting employees for promotion. Supervisors shall be considered for recognition when there is evidence that they have done an outstanding job in motivating the interest and participation of their employees in the Incentive Awards Program.

9. DOCUMENTATION OF AWARDS. The action or accomplishment for which the award is made shall be fully documented. When the award proposal is based on savings or estimated savings, the Agency Head shall:

- a. Indicate the method used in determining the savings.
- b. Account for the savings as either:
 - (1) Appropriation savings;
 - (2) Increased output at the same cost; or
 - (3) Application of resources saved to some other necessary activity.

The Agency Head shall maintain records of each award granted, including the basis for determination of the type and amount of award, for inspection by the Department.

10. PROMPT PROCESSING OF EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS. In order to encourage maximum employee participation in the incentive awards program and to obtain all possible benefits to the Department and to the Federal Government, the Director of Personnel and the Agency Heads shall provide for the prompt processing of all employee contributions.

11. REFERRAL OF ADOPTED EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS. In order that employee contributions may be considered for the widest possible applicability and use, Agency Heads shall provide for the review of all approved suggestions to determine those which might be used throughout the Department or throughout the Federal

Service. At least once every three months agencies will submit to the Director of Personnel brief summaries of adopted contributions which in their opinion may have application in other Departments or agencies. The summaries shall include the name of the individual to be contacted by interested agencies or departments for detailed information concerning the adopted idea together with a list of activities or agencies where it is believed the contribution can be used. The Director of Personnel will make appropriate referral to agencies within the Department, and will forward those contributions which may have application to other Departments to the Civil Service Commission.

12. ADDITIONAL AGENCY PROGRAMS. The Department's Incentive Awards program which provides for cash and honor awards is intended to recognize all types of employee contributions. Therefore, the Department will not establish additional programs for recognizing particular classes of employees or individuals engaged in certain functions. (This means that the Department will not provide for a "Safety Award", an "Inventors Award", "Scientists Award", a "Crop Insurance Award" or similar type of award.) However, it is recognized that additional incentive awards programs at the agency level which would provide for such awards may be desirable in certain instances. Programs of this nature may be developed. However, if the plans for the operation of these types of programs include the purchase of emblems, pins, etc. or some other similar expenditure, they must be submitted to the Director of Personnel for prior approval.

13. CONTRIBUTIONS ORIGINATING IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS. Suggestions received from the Civil Service Commission for possible application in the Department will be handled by the Director of Personnel who will refer them to appropriate Agency Heads.

SECTION 2 --CASH AWARDS

14. AGENCY HEADS. Agency Heads are authorized to approve and grant cash awards in amounts up to and including \$300. Plans for the redelegation of this authority to field establishments must have prior approval of the Director of Personnel

15. DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL. The Director of Personnel is authorized to approve and grant cash awards in amounts of over \$300 but not more than \$1,000, and will recommend cases in excess of this amount to the Administrative Assistant Secretary for approval.

16. DETERMINING AMOUNT OF AWARD. a. Monetary Savings. The amount of the award will be determined in accordance with the following Award Table for Tangible Savings (Chapter I-4 of the Federal Personnel Manual):

Award Scale for Tangible Savings

<u>Savings</u>	<u>Amount of Award</u>
\$1-\$200.....	\$10.
\$201-\$1,000.....	\$10 for the first \$200 in savings and \$5 for each additional \$100 or fraction thereof.
\$1,001-\$10,000.....	\$50 for the first \$1,000 in savings and \$5 for each additional \$200 or fraction thereof.
\$10,001-\$100,000.....	\$275 for the first \$10,000 in savings and \$5 for each additional \$1,000 or fraction thereof.
\$100,000 or more.....	\$725 for the first \$100,000 in savings and \$5 for each additional \$5,000 or fraction thereof.

If for special reasons, the Agency Head believes that a different amount is justified, the case should be referred to the Director of Personnel, with complete justification.

b. Intangible Benefits. A cash award may be made for an adopted contribution which does not lend itself to appraisal on the basis of monetary savings or

results in combined monetary savings and intangible benefits. General criteria for appraising an award based on intangible benefits are:

- (1) Increased efficiency,
- (2) Conservation of Property,
- (3) Improved working conditions,
- (4) Better Service, or
- (5) Other types of improvement.

In determining the amount of the award, consideration should be given to such factors as extent and scope of application, significance of the contribution, and importance of the program affected. Taking these factors into consideration, agencies will develop their own intangible awards table for amounts up to and including \$300. Intangible awards in excess of \$300 will be determined in accordance with the Department's intangible awards table, set forth below:

<u>Value of Benefit</u>	<u>Branch</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>Agency Wide</u>	<u>Dept. Wide</u>
Moderate	---	---	\$300-500	\$500-725
High	\$300-500	\$500-725	725-1000	1000-2000
Outstanding	725-1000	1000-2000	2000- 3000	3000-5000

Evaluation of Table:

Moderate Benefit: (1) Involving an important improvement affecting minor programs.
(2) Involving important changes in methods or procedures.

High Benefit: (1) Involving a major improvement, usually affecting major programs.
(2) Involving major changes in methods or procedures.

Outstanding Benefit: Involving outstanding improvements, materially affecting major programs.

c. Combined Monetary Savings and Intangible Benefits. Normally, awards will be based on either, but not both, types of benefits. Awards based on monetary savings will be limited to the amount determined by the monetary savings since it is felt that intangible benefits can be attributed to the majority of achievements. Awards based on intangible benefits should be determined in accordance with the intangible awards table. However, in exceptional cases where significant monetary savings occur, the intangible award may be increased to include the awards value based on monetary savings.

A contribution made by more than one employee or by a group of employees, all employees contributing, including supervisors, may share in a cash award. Such an award may be in equal shares, or to each employee in proportion to his contribution. The total amount of the award should generally be the amount authorized for a cash award if made to one individual, except that a \$10 minimum award shall be given to each employee in a group. Exceptions to this rule should be submitted to the Director of Personnel for prior approval.

Cash awards for sustained above average work performance that merits recognition will be limited to \$300, and must cover a period of at least six months.

17. PRESENTATION OF CASH AWARDS. Agencies will present, with appropriate ceremonies, awards for suggestions adopted within the agency and by other agencies within the Department. The Director of Personnel will present cash awards for suggestions adopted on a Department-wide basis, and in other Departments within the Federal Service.

SECTION 3 - HONORARY AWARDS

18. TYPES OF HONOR AWARDS. Three types of honor awards will be bestowed.

a. Distinguished Service Award. Employees whose achievements qualify for the Distinguished Service Award (individual citation) will be presented with a gold medal, a certificate, and a gold lapel emblem. The Distinguished Service Award (unit citation) will consist of a gold medal and a plaque identifying the unit and briefly describing the achievement.

b. Superior Service Award. Employees whose achievements qualify for the Superior Service Award (individual citation) will be presented with a silver medal, a certificate, and a silver lapel emblem. The Superior Service Award (unit citation) will consist of a silver medal and a plaque identifying the unit and briefly describing the achievement.

c. Length-of-Service Award. Ten or more years of service with the Department is deemed to be worthy of recognition by award of an appropriate length-of-service emblem. The Length-of-Service Award will consist of a miniature shield and a certificate. The emblem will have an enamel panel of green for 10 years of service, white for 20, red for 30, blue for 40, and gold for 50.

19. ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS. a. General Qualifications. Any person shall be eligible for an award for services rendered while employed by the Department. An "employee" is defined as a person holding some type of appointment from the Department of Agriculture. Participants in a service for which a Distinguished or Superior Service Award is made that are not employees of the Department will not be eligible for any award, but their contribution will be appropriately cited at the ceremony of presentation to the associated employee, employees, or unit with which they cooperated.

b. Eligibility Standards for the Distinguished Service Award. Any employee will be eligible for consideration for the Distinguished Service Award whose

achievement constitutes a notably outstanding contribution to agriculture and to the public service. It is not possible to foresee all types of outstanding accomplishment through which an individual may distinguish himself in the various fields served by the Department of Agriculture, but the following illustrative examples will serve as a general guide:

- (1) Outstanding service to agriculture and rural life;
- (2) Major contribution to science;
- (3) Outstanding skill in public administration;
- (4) Distinguished authorship;
- (5) Notably creative service;
- (6) Heroic action.

Two or more employees may each receive awards for a distinguished achievement in which they share. The Distinguished Service Award (unit citation) will be presented when a team, project group, or organization unit accomplishes a distinguished achievement and it is not feasible to individually identify the participants or their respective contributions. Achievements considered but passed over by the Board of Distinguished Service Awards will be considered for the Superior Service Award.

c. Eligibility Standards for the Superior Service Award. Any employee will be eligible for consideration for the Superior Service Award as a result of service of unusual value beyond that ordinarily required. The Superior Service Award will be presented for meritorious performance, such as illustrated below:

- (1) Meritorious service to agriculture and rural life;
- (2) Valuable contribution to science;
- (3) Effective public administration;
- (4) Meritorious authorship;
- (5) Unusual courage or competence in an emergency;
- (6) Meritorious service of a creative nature;

- (7) Meritorious execution of duties, establishing an exemplary record;
- (8) Initiation of a suggestion that has resulted in important savings in money, time, materials, personnel, or equipment;
- (9) Initiative in devising work methods that result in important savings in money, time, materials, personnel, or equipment;
- (10) Achievement in improving the morale of employees with consequent improvement in work performance.

Two or more employees may each receive awards for a meritorious achievement in which they share. A Superior Service Award (unit citation) will be presented when a team, project group, or organization unit accomplishes a meritorious achievement and it is not feasible to individually identify the participants or their respective contributions. Employees retiring from the service will not be awarded Superior Service Awards on the basis of long service. Determination of the eligibility of such employees for awards should be made at the time when performance justifies that action and ordinarily should not be postponed until retirement.

d. Eligibility Standards for the Length-of-Service Award.

(1) General. Each employee who has completed 10 years of service or more in the Department may be recognized by a Length-of-Service Award after completion of his tenth year and at 10-year intervals thereafter. Service will be computed on a net basis. Rolls of persons employed on a full-time basis will be prepared from existing service records. A person employed on an intermittent basis for a net total of 10 or more years may apply for a Length-of-Service Award; however, he shall in each case submit a statement of his service with the Department. Service in an agency prior to its incorporation in the Department will be considered eligible service. Time on military furlough from an agency of the Department will be considered as service with the Department.

(2) Employees who leave the Department in the future. When an employee who has more than 10 years of service in the Department leaves under honorable conditions, he should be given a Length-of-Service certificate showing the exact number of years he has served. The use of this type of certificate, as general practice, is optional with the head of the agency, but it will be issued in all cases where a request for such certificate is made by the employee.

(3) Employees who have already left the Department. Employees who served 10 or more years in the Department and who have left under honorable conditions shall, upon their request, be given a Length-of-Service certificate showing the exact number of years they have served in the Department and the appropriate Length-of-Service pin.

20. AWARD COMMITTEES. a. Committee of Distinguished Service Awards. A Committee of Distinguished Service Awards is appointed annually by the Secretary. It consists of three distinguished private citizens and three employees of the Department of Agriculture. Of the latter group, one is the Director of Personnel, who serves as Recorder. The Committee recommends to the Secretary those persons and units that should receive Distinguished Service Awards.

b. Committee of Superior Service Awards. A Committee of Superior Service Awards is appointed annually by the Secretary. It consists of seven employees of the Department of Agriculture. One is the Director of Personnel, who serves as Recorder. The Committee recommends to the Secretary those persons and units that should receive Superior Service Awards.

c. Length-of-Service Determination. The Director of Personnel determines the eligibility of persons recommended for Length-of-Service Awards.

21. NOMINATIONS FOR AWARD. a. General. The agency incentive awards committee will make recommendations for awards to the agency head. The agency head will submit to the Director of Personnel on February 15 of each year, and at such other times as the Secretary may designate, recommendations for awards to his employees. Nominations for Length-of-Service Awards will be submitted on or before April 1. Any employee may recommend nomination of an employee to the agency head.

b. Distinguished Service and Superior Service Nominations. In the majority of instances the Board will have no personal knowledge of the individual recommended, and while the information submitted need not be lengthy or drawn out, it should be complete and factual. Nominations failing to receive favorable consideration for one year's awards, may be resubmitted.

(1) Form of recommendations. Nominations shall be submitted in an original and seven copies. They should be dittoed or mimeographed. The following information should be furnished in the order shown.

- (a) Nomination for (Distinguished or Superior) Award;
- (b) Name of Agency;
- (c) Nominee's name (as it is intended to appear on award certificate);
- (d) Grade, designation, and salary;
- (e) Official headquarters;
- (f) Suggested citation (limited to approximately 30 words);
- (g) Detailed description of achievement. (Attach to recommendation a copy of nominee's position description.)

(2) Exhibit material. Reference to published or other material compiled by the nominee need not be supported by the submission of the material itself. However, agencies should be in a position to furnish such exhibit material upon request by the Board.

c. Length-of-Service Awards.

(1) For 40- and 50-year awards. A list by categories of the names of persons who have served a total of 40 or 50 years in the Department should be submitted to the Director of Personnel.

(2) For 10-, 20-, and 30-year awards. A memorandum showing the number of employees to receive each award should be submitted to the Director of Personnel. Though names are not required to be listed for these awards, they may be requested in individual instances by the Director of Personnel.

(3) Preparation and submission of nominations.

(a) The lists for 40- and 50-year awards should list separately those to receive 40-year awards and those to receive 50-year awards. Each list should be arranged alphabetically.

(b) The nominations shall be made on or before April 1 for awards due May 15 of that year.

22. PRESENTATION. Presentation of awards will be made with appropriate ceremony on the 15th of May each year (the date when Agriculture was established as an independent bureau in 1862) and at such other times as the Secretary may designate. Distinguished Service Awards will be presented by the Secretary. Superior Service and Length-of-Service Awards will be presented by the Secretary or by the respective heads of agencies of the Department.

23. REVIEW BY DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL. Distinguished and Superior Service Awards will be reviewed by the Director of Personnel for possible nomination for Presidential awards.

SECTION 4 - REPORTS

24. ANNUAL REPORTS. The Civil Service Commission requires each department to submit an annual report on the operation of its Awards program during the preceding fiscal year.

- a. Agency Reports. Agency reports should be forwarded to the Director of Personnel by August 15 of each year in accordance with instructions issued by the Commission and the Department.
- b. Office of Personnel. The agency reports will be consolidated in the Office of Personnel and will be forwarded to the CSC by September first of each year.

